# ICTs in Education Liberia

**Liberia**

**Source:** World Fact Book [1]

**Overview**

Liberia is in the process of developing a comprehensive ICT policy called E-Liberia: Vision 2010 for the country, yet efforts at increasing access and use of ICTs has already begun under the Telecommunication Policy. In the education sector Liberia has no specific policy on ICTs but there is a wide acknowledge within the educational sector for the need to incorporate ICTs in schools and universities

**Country Profile**

Freed US slaves established Liberia in the nineteenth century as Africa's first independent country effective July 26, 1847. After nine years of misrule and decline, several rebel factions (including one led by Charles Taylor) mounted an uprising against President Doe, beginning an eight-year civil war that devastated the population. A peace agreement, brokered by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), ended the fighting in 1997 with a round of Presidential elections

During Presidential elections organized October 11, 2005 and November 8, 2005, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf became Liberia's – and Africa's – first elected head of state.

Liberia's legislature is a bicameral National Assembly consisting of a Senate (26 seats) and a House of Representatives (64 seats). Members of both institutions are elected for

nine- and six-year terms respectively by popular vote, the last of which was held October 2005 for both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Historically, Liberia's economy has been predominantly commodities based. Prior to the war, the rubber industry generated over US$100 million export earnings annually. The discovery of significant iron ore deposits attracted substantial foreign investment in the 1960s and 1970s, with the export-oriented concession sector as a whole generating about one-third of government revenue

Limited available information suggests that in recent years, there has been a modest rebound in economic activity, largely driven by donor assistance (predominantly humanitarian aid) [2].

**Table 1: Selected Country Data[2&3]**

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 3.3 million |
| Languages | English |
| Adult literacy rate (% people aged 15 and above) | - |
| 2005 Economic activity (% of GDP) | Agriculture- 63.6; Industry 15.2-; Services- 21.1 |
| Human Development Index | - |
| Human Poverty Index | - |
| Per capita Gross National Income in USD | 130 (2000); 120 (2004); 1300 (2005) |

**Structure of Educational System[4]**

Elementary education lasts for six years. Secondary education consists of two three-year cycles: three years of Junior secondary (Grades VII-IX) and three years of senior secondary education (Grades X-XII). At the end of Grade IX, students sit for an examination administered by the West African Examination Council (WAEC). Successful students are eligible to enter Senior High School. Upper secondary education culminates in the WAEC Certificate Examination, which is the basis for access to higher education institutions. An entrance examination is required for access to higher education.

Higher education is provided by universities, colleges of education, business and polytechnics as well as institutions that offer professional courses such as bookkeeping and accounting, architecture, law, medicine, and mass communication. Universities train high-level manpower in various fields. The University of Liberia is given the responsibility for research. The civil war has seriously damaged the University. Over 90% of its facilities were looted or destroyed. Many faculty members fled to other countries, and student enrolment dropped. The Cuttington University College has now reopened. Each tertiary education institution is under the Ministry of Education, the National Commission on Higher Education and the Board of Trustees but sets its own

standards

**Table 2: Selected Education Data[2]**

| | |
|---|---|
| Primary enrollment (% gross) | 99.2(2000) |
| Secondary enrollment (% gross) | 33.2(2000); |
| Primary Completion Rates (% of 6-12 year age group) | - |
| Tertiary enrollment (%gross) | 15.5(2000) |
| Ratio of Girls to Boys in primary & Secondary (%) | 72.7(2000) |

## ICT Policy

### National

Liberia is in the process of preparing its national ICTs Policy E-Liberia: Vision 2010. However a finalised Telecommunications Policy under the Telecommunications Act 2006[5] provides insights into the ICT vision for the country. This Policy establishes the framework for the evolution of the Liberian telecommunications sector, and the transformation of Liberia towards an information-based economy and society.

The objectives of the Telecommunication policy are the following:

- To promote the development of the Liberian telecommunications infrastructure and markets;
- To promote market liberalization, private sector expansion, and fair and effective competition
- throughout the telecommunications sector;
- To create and establish an independent Regulatory Agency responsible for telecommunications
- and spectrum regulation;
- To promote universal access to telecommunications services throughout Liberia;
- To support education, economic, and social development within Liberia
- To ensure flexibility and adaptability and ease of access to radio spectrum resources in
- Response to technological advances, and economic, social and markets factors.

The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPT) is responsible for determining broad sector policy and development strategy, in conformance with the goals and laws of the Government of Liberia.

### Education

On the education front Liberia is yet to develop any comprehensive ICT strategy for the education sector. Yet the proposed Telecommunication act specifically makes provisions for ICTs in education. The policy states “The educational system, from primary through

university curriculum, shall incorporate awareness and applications of ICTs, to prepare students to participate fully in the information age"[5].

Also it goes on to say "The Government will promote universal access or community access especially in primary and secondary schools and universities, community health facilities and hospitals, telecenters and any other public or private community centers" [5].

## Infrastructure

### National

The Liberia Telecommunications sector like most of its other infrastructure has been severely hit by the civil war, copper wires have been looted and there is very little telecommunication services outside the capital Monrovia. However progress is being made and the existing Telecom operators are busy expanding their infrastructure to other parts of the country.

Also several private sector initiatives have lead to an expanding use of computers and internet cafes in the major cities especially Monrovia.

| **Indicators** | **Numbers** |
|---|---|
| **Fixed Line Operators** | 1 |
| Liberia Telecommunications Corporation | - |
| Total Fixed Line Telephone Subscribers | - |
| **Cellular Mobile Operators** | 4 |
| Cellcom Lonestar Communications | - |
| Corporation (Areeba) | - |
| Cellcom Liberia | - |
| Comium Liberia | - |
| Atlantic Wireless Liberia (Libercell) | - |
| **Total Cellular Mobile Subscribers** | 200,000 |
| Internet users per 1000 inhabitants (2004) | 1 |
| Personal Computers per 100 inhabitants (2004) | - |

Sources: World Bank and MPT[6]

### Education

Efforts at rebuilding the education infrastructure in Liberia have included increasing access to ICTs in schools and universities. A Pilot Computer Project under which computer laboratories were established in seven public high schools in seven of the political subdivisions has been launched. The goal of this program is to make computer education an integral part of public school education curriculum in all counties

At the tertiary level there is also a dire need for information technology at both Cuttington University and University of Liberia, including the Internet, CD-ROMs, and web-ready computers.

| **Activity** | **Description** | **Organization** | **Funding Source** | **Contact** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| From Guns to Computers | ICT multimedia and skill training centre for child ex-combatants | Education for Peace in Africa/ SNA | School Net Africa (SNA) | **http://www.schoolnetafrica.net/278.0.html** |
| ICT Training for Young Refugees in Liberia | enable development of an efficient and sustainable education in ICT including the Internet area | UNHCR | International Telecommunication Organisation | **http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/CDS/newslog/rss_bdt_newslog.asp** |
| GATech Project | Improving ICT training and infrastructure in University of Liberia | Georgia Technology and University of Liberia | Georgia technology (USA) | **http://www-static.cc.gatech.edu/~mikeb/Liberia/liberia.indx.htm** |
| Hoffm | 14 public | Monrovia | | **http://nhanced.net/sites/site15/index.cfm?page=page&id=989&pageid=142** |

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| an Technology Centers | access computers for use at no charge | Public Library | | |

**Implementing ICT in Education: What Helps & What Hinders?**

Table 5 below provides the various factors that help and hinder ICTs and education growth in Liberia.

**Table 5: Analysis of Factors Influencing ICT Adoption**

| Factors | Enabling Features | Constraints |
|---|---|---|
| *Policy Framework & Implementation Plans* | A commitment to policy development | Lack of a clear present strategy for ICTs in education |
| *Advocacy leadership* | Strong leadership on ICTs and education from the Minister for Vocational Education | |
| *Gender Equity access to ICTs* | | |
| *Infrastructure & Access* | A serious commitment for infrastructure development in the education sector by government, donors and private sector | unreliable electricity |
| *Collaborating mechanisms* | | |
| *Human Resource Capacity* | | A huge skills gap in meeting the ICT needs of the education sector |
| *Fiscal Resources* | A large expected inflow of donor and Multi Lateral support for Liberia's reconstruction | |
| *Learning content* | | No learning content on ICTs currently exist in schools |
| *Procurement regulations* | | |
| *Attitudes* | A firm believe that the education sector is the key to the reconstruction of Liberia | |
| *Sustainability* | | A high reliance on donor and philanthropic funding |

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**End Notes**

1. https://cia.gov/cia//publications/factbook/geos/li.html
2. http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/LIBERIAEXTN/0,,menuPK:356204~pagePK:141132~piPK:141107~theSitePK:356194,00.html
3. http://hdr-beta.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_LBR.html
4. www.unesco.org/iau/onlinedatabases/systems_data/lr.rtf
5. http://www.jhellerstein.com/liberiatelecompolicy.pdf
6. http://devdata.worldbank.org/ict/lbr_ict.pdf

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